



March 31, 2023

RE: Support for the state of Alaska to assume the dredge and fill permitting program under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act

Dear honorable members of the 33rd Alaska Legislature,

As an organization with more than 600 members representing the businesses of Interior Alaska, the Greater Fairbanks Chamber of Commerce supports responsible development and management of state resources. We ask the Alaska Legislature to provide the necessary funding for the Department of Environmental Conservation to apply for and assume responsibility for implementing Section 404 of the federal Clean Water Act.

While we recognize this adds additional costs to an already-strained budget, we think it is critical to our state and regional development for the DEC to assume primacy for this program. A state program will be more accountable and more likely to consider state priorities.

Recent federal actions, including delays in issuing permits, have negatively impacted the business climate in Alaska. We feel the state will better address the needs of developers, who are already dealing with a short construction season and a tight labor market, while protecting our wetlands.

We know that, under the law, offsets need to be made to address unavoidable adverse impacts on wetlands. We think state primacy over wetlands permitting will allow the DEC to explore new and creative ways to perform this compensatory mitigation. There is much opportunity in Alaska to conduct these offsets in innovative ways that make sense for our young, developing state.

We enthusiastically join the chorus of trade organizations who support switching decision-making authority over wetlands permitting from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation.

Sincerely,

Greater Fairbanks Chamber of Commerce

Jeremy Johnson
President & CEO

Patrick Cotter
Board Chair

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